

Fortsberg

Southeast of Coral Bay

Coral Bay

Fortsberg is significant as the site of the first successful slave rebellion on the island of St. John. On November 23, 1733, African slaves seized the fort and massacred the garrison to occupy most of the plantations on the island. Many plantation owners fled to Peter Duro's Caneel Bay plantation, which was fortified, to seek shelter.

The slaves surprised the Europeans with their adept military strategy. Two attempts to suppress the rebellion were unsuccessful. Finally, the governor of Martinique came to the aid of the Dutch, sending 400 French soldiers to the island. The French soldiers were finally able to put down the rebellion, but only after a six-month campaign ending in May 1734. Much of the fort was destroyed during the conflict.

The fort was rebuilt in its present form in 1760; it was occupied by the British in 1801 and from 1807 to 1815 during the Napoleonic Wars. Today the fort is a reminder of the first step in the long struggle for justice faced by Africans in the present-day Virgin Islands. [CAD 9/1/76, 76002218]